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New York

President:	Mr. Chowdhury	(Bangladesh)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Namibia	Mrs. Ashipala-Musavyi
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Yel'chenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Ms. Soderberg

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (S/2000/186)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Expression of sympathy to the Government and people of Ukraine

The President: At the outset of the meeting, I should like, on behalf of the Security Council, to express deep sympathy to the Government and people of Ukraine for the great loss of life suffered as a result of the recent mining catastrophe in the Barakov mine in the eastern part of Ukraine. I would request the representative of Ukraine to convey to his Government and to the bereaved families our deep condolences.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): On behalf of my Government, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you, Mr. President, and through you to all members of the Security Council, for the condolences just expressed in connection with the tragic accident at the coal mine in the eastern part of Ukraine.

As a result of the gas explosion in the coal mine, more than 80 workers were killed. Our Government has set up a special commission to investigate the tragic accident, which is the biggest of its kind in the history of my country.

I will immediately convey your condolences, which are a source of great moral support, to my Government and to the families of the deceased.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (S/2000/186)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Annabi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), document S/2000/186.

At this meeting the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, after which members of the Council may ask questions and make comments.

I give the floor to Mr. Annabi.

Mr. Annabi: Members of the Council have before them the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which was issued on 7 March. This report covers developments since the last report, which was issued on 11 January 2000 (S/2000/13).

During the reporting period there has been some progress in furthering the peace process in Sierra Leone, but in many areas the process has remained slow. There has been in particular little progress in disarmament in the northern and eastern parts of the country, while rebel groups continued to interfere with humanitarian activities and with UNAMSIL patrols and to harass the civilian population in those areas.

A special meeting was organized on 1 and 2 March 2000 under the auspices of the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Bamako, which was attended by high-level representatives of ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Sierra Leonean parties. The special meeting concluded with the adoption of a communiqué which calls on all Sierra Leonean leaders to translate their expressions of commitment to the peace process into concrete action.

In a significant development since the issuance of the report, a high-level meeting was convened on 9 March, last week, to follow up on the Bamako meeting with the participation of President Kabbah, Mr. Sankoh, Mr. Koroma and Chief Hinga Norman, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Adeniji, the UNAMSIL Force Commander and the Force Commander of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, ECOMOG. At that meeting the following decisions were reached and subsequently made public. There would be full and unhindered access to all parts of the country for UNAMSIL, humanitarian agencies and all civilians, including refugees and internally displaced persons. There would no longer be areas under control of any combatant group and the Government would have full control over every part of the country. Finally, disarmament would take place in selected areas in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, where facilities are in place, and thereafter in other areas as facilities become available. The next day, on 10 March, the Special Representative convened a follow-up meeting with representatives of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the Government, UNAMSIL and ECOMOG, and at that meeting it was decided that factions would remove all their checkpoints within 48 hours.

During the period covered by the report there were several serious incidents involving UNAMSIL and former rebel elements or combatants, although in the case of the main incident, involving the Guinean troops, they were not at that point in time under UNAMSIL command; they had not yet joined UNAMSIL. In the course of these incidents, peacekeeping troops were forced to surrender their weapons to groups of armed rebels. Measures have since been taken at the request of the Secretary-General to prevent such incidents from happening in the future and to try to retrieve these weapons. While some of the weapons have been returned, the bulk of the weapons seized from the Guinean troops have yet to be returned by the RUF.

On 23 February 2000, a convoy of the Indian battalion moving from Kenema to Daru was also stopped by a large number of well-armed RUF fighters. A stand-off ensued and continued for two days, but eventually the UNAMSIL convoy had to redeploy to Kenema. On 7 March, however, another convoy of the Indian battalion was able to reach Daru without being obstructed by the RUF.

UNAMSIL is now deployed, apart from Freetown, in Lungi, Port Loko, Lunsar, Masiaka, Makeni, Magburaka, Kenema, Daru and Mile 91, as well as at Bo and Moyamba. Successive efforts have been made to also deploy troops to Koidu and Kailahun on the eastern tip of the country, but most of these efforts were unsuccessful as a result of the RUF's refusal to allow UNAMSIL freedom of movement. On 10 March, however, a UNAMSIL convoy of 65 troops was able to reach Kailahun and Buedu on a recce mission. At the same time, according to oral reports received today from UNAMSIL, the envisaged deployment of a part of the Indian contingent today to Kailahun was again stopped by the RUF. In addition, no troops have yet been able to reach Koidu, although patrols of UNAMSIL military observers have visited the town on four occasions.

In a letter dated 13 January 2000 addressed to the Secretary-General, the Foreign Minister of Nigeria offered to suspend, for 90 days, the withdrawal of the Nigerian troops serving under ECOMOG in Sierra Leone. He made that offer in order to assist in preventing a possible security vacuum before the full deployment of the expanded UNAMSIL. In subsequent decisions with the Nigerian military authorities, it was agreed that two Nigerian infantry battalions and one tank company would be incorporated into UNAMSIL. I wish to express our gratitude to the Government of Nigeria for its cooperation and for the flexibility it has shown to help maintain the needed level of security in the country until the full deployment of UNAMSIL.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme has continued, but albeit at a slow pace. At the same time, a significant increase in disarmament of former Civil Defence Forces (CDF) combatants occurred during this reporting period. As of today, a total of 18,332 ex-combatants have been disarmed and demobilized. However, we are concerned about the number and the low quality of the weapons which have been surrendered, as well as about the ratio of collected arms to the number of ex-combatants, as many fighters report for demobilization only with

ammunition and hand grenades. As of today, a total of 6,426 weapons have been recovered, as well as 1,545 grenades and over 1.5 million rounds of ammunition.

The security situation at the disarmament and demobilization camps also continues to be a matter of concern, especially at Port Loko. UNAMSIL has recently begun to destroy the ammunition and unexploded mortar rounds collected in the course of this exercise.

Turning to the human rights situation, I want to recall that the human rights situation in Sierra Leone was extensively discussed at the Security Council consultations of 8 March. Therefore I will not go into details today.

I would, however, like to state once again that the human rights situation in Sierra Leone remains a cause for serious concern, in particular in the area of Port Loko, where former elements of the Sierra Leone Army are present, and in RUF-held areas, with continuing incidents of abductions, rape and harassment of civilians. However, according to our human rights observers, there has been some improvement in the human rights situation in areas where UNAMSIL has been able to deploy.

At the present time, the activities of the Sierra Leonean police continue to be limited to the western part of the country, in particular Freetown. Also, the local police still lack the necessary personnel, facilities and equipment to fulfil essential tasks. Despite these challenges, progress has been made in the training of police officers, improving service conditions, monitoring their conduct and implementing structural and personnel changes, which are being conducted under the leadership of the Sierra Leonean Inspector General of Police with the support of the Commonwealth Police Task Force and UNAMSIL's civilian police advisers.

On the humanitarian side, with the deployment of UNAMSIL military units, humanitarian access is showing signs of improvement. Urgent action continues to be needed to address the appalling conditions of health, water, sanitation and school facilities in most of the assessed areas. Meanwhile, RUF resistance to UNAMSIL deployment continues to slow humanitarian access to approximately 2.6 million war-affected Sierra Leoneans in the upper Northern and Eastern provinces of the country. Only limited humanitarian assistance has been possible in the critical locations of Kambia in the Northern Province and in Kailahun and Kono in the Eastern Province. Should humanitarian access improve, the United Nations agencies would require additional generous support from the international donor community.

I also wish to inform Council members of two incidents that took place on 7 March, in which humanitarian workers were detained and mistreated by RUF fighters near Kabala and Rogberi, respectively. All of these aid workers have been released, although one was shot in the hand. As a result, the non-governmental organizations concerned — Médecins sans Frontières and Christian Extension Services — have suspended their operations in RUF-held areas.

The Secretary-General's report outlines the main steps to be taken in the peace process so as to establish priorities and responsibilities for all concerned and to provide the international community with benchmarks to measure progress. These main steps can be grouped under four specific areas of activity: first, the early disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all ex-combatants; secondly, the extension of state authority, including law enforcement, throughout the country; thirdly, national reconciliation and democratization; and fourthly, the improvement of Sierra Leone's own capacity to ensure its own security. Significant progress during the course of this year towards these important objectives would be an essential precondition for the organization and conduct of the parliamentary and presidential elections envisaged for the spring of 2001.

It is clear that progress towards these objectives would require a sustained commitment by all concerned, as well as significant material and financial resources. In this regard, the Secretary-General very much welcomes the organization of the donor conference scheduled to be held in London on 27 March at the initiative of the British Government, and he has asked Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette to represent the United Nations on that occasion to underscore the importance that he attaches to this meeting.

The Secretary-General would like on this occasion to appeal to the donor community to make generous contributions, in particular to the World Bank Multi-donor Trust Fund, to cover the present shortfall of approximately $20 million in the funding of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It would also be useful if financial support could be provided for various other aspects of the peace process, including small-scale quick-impact projects, civil affairs, the rehabilitation of the civilian police, support for political parties — including the transformation of the

RUF into a political party — and other democratization efforts through the United Nations Sierra Leone Trust Fund, as proposed in the report.

The Secretary-General's report stresses, however, that resources alone will not be not sufficient. In the final analysis, the Government of Sierra Leone, the RUF and other groups and all Sierra Leonean leaders bear a personal responsibility for moving the process forward and they should intensify their efforts to this end. In this regard, the frequently negative approach taken by Mr. Sankoh towards key elements of the peace process and the role entrusted to the United Nations remains a cause for concern. Hostile public remarks by the RUF leader about UNAMSIL and its mandate have led to increasing tension between RUF fighters and UNAMSIL troops on the ground. They also give rise to serious doubts about the commitment of Mr. Sankoh and the RUF to the faithful implementation of the Lomé Agreement. Mr. Sankoh should therefore dispel these doubts in a tangible and unequivocal manner. His participation in the high-level meeting held on 9 March is a step in the right direction, but more needs to be done.

The continued ceasefire violations perpetrated against civilians and peacekeepers is not acceptable. The persistent obstruction of UNAMSIL patrols and deployments is also unacceptable and must cease immediately. However, UNAMSIL has made impressive progress, in the face of what are considerable difficulties, to deploy to many locations in Sierra Leone, as I have indicated, including to areas where no deployment had previously taken place.

The efforts of regional leaders, in particular President Konaré of Mali, the current Chairman of ECOWAS, to help keep the peace process on track are very much appreciated and the United Nations hopes that these very helpful and constructive efforts will continue in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to appeal to Council members to, perhaps, agree to a modification of the reporting cycle on UNAMSIL. Reports have so far been submitted every 45 days; we believe that the Council may wish to consider modifying that reporting cycle to a report every 60 days, if that is agreeable to Council members.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's first report under Security Council resolution 1289 (2000), not least for its clear indication of the problem areas in implementing that resolution and of the priority areas now for United Nations action.

We are also very grateful for the briefing that Mr. Annabi has just given us, which brings us up to date on a number of important aspects. I can say straight away that the United Kingdom has no objection if he extends the reporting period to 60 days. We understand the pressures which the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is under at the moment.

My visit to Sierra Leone from 8 to 10 March, which coincided with that of the United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development, Ms. Clare Short, bears out the main conclusions in the Secretary-General's analysis.

The first thing to strike a visitor — and I travelled outside Freetown to the township of Masiaka and to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) camps at Port Loko — is the overwhelming desire of the great majority of Sierra Leoneans for peace and a normal life. There is, for instance, no religious animosity among the communities of Sierra Leone. I think that Muslims and Christians live together in Sierra Leone in harmony as great as anywhere in Africa. I would guess that even a majority of rank-and-file former combatants are eager to disarm and rebuild their civilian lives. But the DDR process, having so far attracted over 18,000 participants, is now slowing to a trickle because combatants are not getting orders to come in.

Mr. Annabi also referred to the quality of weapons that are being handed over. I watched a number of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) members hand over what looked like relics from the First World War in applying for their $300 for the DDR process. Clearly, the good weapons, however obtained, are being hidden in the bush.

The onus is therefore on the political leaders to respond to this tangible desire for peace. President Kabbah has already shown that he is prepared to make important compromises to ensure an end to conflict. I made the point to him that he must also know how and when not to compromise, when to be tough for the people's sake. I think he took that point. I did not get the same sense of commitment to peace from the other main factional leaders, least of all, perhaps, from Foday Sankoh. The Secretary-General is absolutely right in his report to be pointing the finger at Sankoh and the RUF as the main impediments to the deployment of the United

Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and to further progress in general in the implementation of the peace process. Secretary of State Short asked him repeatedly to speed up the RUF's response to DDR and to stop blocking UNAMSIL's deployment. Sankoh only bristled in reply, claiming that the RUF were doing no such thing, that he had never authorized killing as a policy, that the RUF had not deprived the Guineans of their weapons and that he had never sold a single diamond to pay for arms. There is, of course, independent evidence that the RUF has done all of these things. The Council's authority, in support of the Lomé Peace Agreement, is being thwarted here in that respect, just as it has been over the travel ban. Insisting on the proper implementation of Council decisions is an important source of pressure on the parties. It is also essential if there is to be a lasting improvement in the appalling humanitarian and human rights situation in the country.

I am glad that the Secretary-General has identified as a priority the rebuilding of new, democratically accountable Sierra Leone armed forces and police. The United Kingdom is contributing personnel and resources to these activities, both of which — army and police — are crucial not only for filling the security vacuum in the country but also for allowing UNAMSIL to do its job and then depart. The United Nations could otherwise be there for a very long time. I am pleased that President Kabbah made it quite clear to us during our visit last week that clear and transparent selection procedures will be established for entry into the army and the police and that any Sierra Leonean, from whatever faction, will be eligible if he has the right qualities.

Elections are going to be a vital part of the implementation process. In a country where State authority extends to less than half of its territory, organizing elections will be a complicated business and, no doubt, a costly one for the international community. But we have to make the constitutional timetable stick if we can — presidential elections by the end of February next year and parliamentary elections three months after that. Elections are just as much an opportunity for the RUF as for other parties, and they must contribute to making Sierra Leone proceed on the Mozambique, rather than the Angola, model. The Council can guess whom I place in the role of a potential Savimbi if it goes wrong in the Sierra Leone context.

The Security Council should be aware that UNAMSIL has got off to quite a difficult — perhaps not fully successful — start. That is no criticism at all of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Adeniji, Force Commander Jetley or other senior United Nations figures there, who are working commendably hard, in the most difficult circumstances, to produce results, and are taking tough action where they can. But the people of Sierra Leone have somehow come to believe that the United Nations was responsible for removing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) — which, with some justification, they trusted to protect them — only to replace it with what seems to them to be poorly equipped and not-so-well motivated United Nations contingents with a different mandate. The loss of the Guinean contingent's weapons, of course, added to this perception.

I went to some trouble on my visit to explain publicly that ECOMOG made its own decision to stop operating, that UNAMSIL is the neutral peacekeeping force called for by all the signatories to the Lomé Peace Agreement and that it is perfectly capable of doing its job if the signatories do theirs. But the Council must monitor this aspect carefully, and insist with the Secretariat that UNAMSIL is brought up to full strength quickly, in quality as well as in quantity. I encouraged Special Representative Adeniji, as part of his important functions, to conduct and inspire a nationwide public information campaign, to bring home to Sierra Leoneans what an important asset UNAMSIL is for them and to seek their cooperation.

Then there is the question of resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently seen as the litmus test of the work of the United Nations in Africa, and the United Kingdom agrees with that. But Sierra Leone, too, is a crucial test. Our Sierra Leone peacekeeping effort, currently the largest United Nations peacekeeping effort worldwide, preceded that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo chronologically and is likely to set a pattern for those that follow. Donor support is therefore absolutely vital. The high-level donors' meeting which the United Kingdom is organizing in London on 27 March will be convened by the Secretary of State for International Development and attended by President Kabbah and, I hope, the Deputy Secretary-General. Its purpose will be to further energize political and financial support for the peace process and to identify the priorities for international funding over the coming period. Urgent assistance is needed if the ground is to be laid for free and fair elections next year and for the eventual departure of

UNAMSIL. I hope that Security Council partners who are able to do so will show the lead on this.

The holding of this open briefing is itself a signal of the Council's concern for the fragile situation in Sierra Leone and of our determination to see the Lomé Agreement implemented. But I think that, since the press is not present at this meeting, a statement directly to the media by you, Mr. President, after the meeting, would add to the impact. When I saw him early on 9 March, President Kabbah had in his hand the text of the statement you made on 8 March after the debate on the humanitarian situation in that country, and he was encouraged by it. I think that you should make it clear, Sir, if Council colleagues agree, that Council members endorse the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report; that they place great weight on the early implementation of all aspects of the Lomé Peace Agreement and commend the efforts of Special Representative Adeniji and of UNAMSIL to this end; that they are disappointed by the slow progress being made in the DDR process in particular; and that they call upon all signatories to the Lomé Agreement, and in particular upon Chairman Sankoh and the RUF, to reaffirm and demonstrate a concrete commitment to the Lomé peace process by allowing the extension of State authority throughout Sierra Leone, in full cooperation with UNAMSIL and with the United Nations team as whole, and by instructing the RUF membership to disarm and to surrender all weapons, including their heavy weapons, their mines and their anti-aircraft equipment.

I commend your decision, Mr. President, to hold this open meeting as a sign of the Security Council's concern for Sierra Leone, and I hope that the conclusions we come to this morning will support and strengthen the efforts of those on the ground who are working for a lasting peace.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom in particular for articulating the points that can be shared with the media following our meeting today.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening in this formal Chamber, for the information of the larger membership of the Organization, today's consideration of the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). This report — which comes one month after the adoption of resolution 1289 (2000), which authorized the expansion of UNAMSIL, making it the largest current United Nations mission — is particularly important in the light of the disturbing reports that continue to filter out of Sierra Leone.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his report and, of course, Assistant Secretary-General Annabi for the update. My delegation is also agreeable to the modification in the reporting cycle that has been proposed by Mr. Annabi, as long as there is regularity in the reporting to the Council. We are also grateful to Ambassador Greenstock, the representative of the United Kingdom, for his own very insightful briefing on the situation in Sierra Leone, based on his recent visit to that country, and also for the very pertinent remarks he has just made.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the developments and shortcomings thus far in the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement. We share the concerns expressed therein regarding, among other things, the slow pace of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, given that only 17,191 ex-combatants have been registered as of 1 March 2000.

The hostile and conflicting public statements that Mr. Foday Sankoh has made against UNAMSIL are indeed regrettable. These and subsequent obstructions placed in the way of the forces deployed to several rebel-held areas serve only to further diminish confidence and raise questions as to Mr. Sankoh's commitment to the peace process. More disturbing is the continued deterioration of the human rights situation in the country, where looting, the burning of houses, harassment and abduction of civilians, rape and sexual abuse continue unabated in rebel-held areas. We cannot but underline that such acts are unacceptable and should cease immediately. The parties to these acts should be told, and told bluntly, that there is no amnesty for crimes committed after the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement.

While noting the general improvements in the human rights situation in areas where UNAMSIL is deployed, the report states clearly that elsewhere in the country the situation remains tense and volatile. It is therefore particularly important that the number of military personnel be quickly brought up to the authorized strength of 11,100.

Further, in the light of the continued attacks on civilians, as well as the refusal by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to cooperate with UNAMSIL, as evidenced by the blocking of main roads and the seizure of weapons by well-armed RUF fighters, it is imperative that UNAMSIL begin responding in a more assertive manner, in accordance with the robust rules of

engagement provided for under the limited Chapter VII mandate the Mission has been granted. We express full support for Mr. Adeniji to continue to take a firm line with former rebel leaders regarding the continuing human rights abuses and non-compliance with the Peace Agreement.

Malaysia appreciates the forthcoming views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, including those contained in paragraphs 41 to 56, which highlight what still needs to be done in order not to lose the momentum of the peace process. We concur with him on the need for the early disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all ex-combatants; the extension of State authority, including law enforcement, throughout the country; national reconciliation and democratization; and the improvement of Sierra Leone's capacity to ensure its own security through the restructuring of its own professional armed forces.

All these factors are pertinent to the successful outcome of the peace process. We call on the parties to honour their solemn pledges and on the international community to continue to assist the Government of Sierra Leone through the provision of much-needed material and financial resources.

In this regard, my delegation notes the shortfall in funding that the Secretary-General has referred to in his report and his appeal for contributions during the upcoming donor conference in London. We express our appreciation to those countries that have contributed generously. In particular, the United Kingdom and the United States of America are among those that have made substantial contributions.

Finally, my delegation will support the proposed statement to the media that has been suggested by Ambassador Greenstock and on the basis of the elements that he has outlined.

Mr. Hamer (Netherlands): I would like to thank Mr. Annabi for his briefing and his introduction of the Secretary-General's report. Like Ambassadors Greenstock and Hasmy before me, let me say that my delegation would be happy to comply with Mr. Annabi's plea for an extension of the reporting period.

The report before us points to some positive developments, but essentially the news is bad. As the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is in the process of deploying — very courageously, I might add — its units have been the targets of rebel attacks and intimidation. There are widespread, major human rights violations, and they are so bad that these violations prompted a strongly worded statement to the press by the Council's President only last week.

This situation is unacceptable, and the main responsibility for it lies quite clearly with Mr. Sankoh and the lack of commitment on the part of Mr. Sankoh and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). This is the theme, the red line running throughout the Secretary-General's report. The process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is proceeding slowly, and while any progress in this area is of course good news, here again the programme is in trouble because of a lack of commitment on the part of the RUF.

While the international community is devising new ways of addressing the needs of a country emerging from conflict, Mr. Sankoh pockets what is offered him under the terms of the peace accord. He sits in the Government and has himself appointed head of the Commission that is supposed to curb the sale of illegally mined diamonds from Sierra Leone, all the while himself dragging his feet when it comes to fulfilling his part of the deal. And worse, Mr. Sankoh is not just trying to obstruct the Peace Agreement, he is in fact trying to intimidate the international community.

While there is much that could and should be said regarding the steps ahead outlined by the Secretary-General at the end of his report, their success is predicated on the international community's success in forcing Mr. Sankoh and his supporters to abide by the Peace Agreement. Without the RUF's cooperation, there just will not be the measure of security and stability needed for faster and further progress.

The Security Council has been unequivocal that it will not put up with Mr. Savimbi any longer. The time has come now to show that the Security Council's patience with Mr. Sankoh is running out.

As part of our effort to ensure a strong and credible UNAMSIL presence, we should spare no effort to ensure the full deployment of UNAMSIL, with access to all parts of Sierra Leone, and firm UNAMSIL action in accordance with its robust rules of engagement.

While UNAMSIL is not fully deployed, the continued presence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is needed to maintain the fragile stability and prevent a security vacuum. We applaud the Nigerian

offer to suspend the withdrawal of Nigerian ECOMOG troops remaining in Sierra Leone.

A warm tribute is due also to President Konaré, whose commitment to regional stability is well known from his leadership in fostering the ECOWAS small arms moratorium and whose energetic current leadership of ECOWAS is contributing greatly to the international community's peace efforts in Sierra Leone.

Finally, I should like to ask two questions of Mr. Annabi. Paragraph 48 of the report states that viable mechanisms should be created to allow the Government and the people of Sierra Leone to reap the benefits of the exploitation of the country's strategic resources. Does this not imply that the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development, which is chaired by Mr. Sankoh, is not in itself such a viable mechanism as intended in paragraph 48?

Finally, I would be grateful if Mr. Annabi could shed some light on the projects that will be developed as part of the community rehabilitation and reintegration programme referred to in paragraph 26 of the Secretary-General's report.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): I would like to join previous speakers in commending the Secretary-General's report and the update given by Mr. Annabi, which have provided us with a clear and objective view of the situation in the areas of responsibility of the expanded United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The analysis presents a broad panorama of both successes and failures on the road to peace in Sierra Leone. We are also thankful to Ambassador Greenstock for the very important firsthand information he has provided us.

There has been encouraging progress in the establishment and functioning of several implementation organs under the terms of the Lomé Agreement. We welcome the measures taken to this end by the parties concerned, and we call upon them to demonstrate their readiness to continue constructive and forward-looking dialogue, bearing in mind that the prospects for stability in the country will depend on their firm determination and political will.

While some progress has been made, the peace process in Sierra Leone continues to face serious challenges. The security situation, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report, remains tense and precarious. The reports of obstruction of the peacekeeping operation — including arms seizures, refusal to allow UNAMSIL to deploy, detainment of peacekeepers and exchange of fire — give rise to the gravest concerns.

The lack of compliance with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme constitutes yet another serious source of concern. It is imperative that all aspects of the DDR mechanism be implemented in an effective and timely manner through the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, with the assistance of UNAMSIL.

The humanitarian and human security challenges in Sierra Leone were addressed previously by the members of the Security Council, and the Council issued a strong and uncompromising response. We reiterate our firm judgment that those responsible for atrocities should be held accountable for their actions as soon as possible.

We fully associate ourselves with the point made by the Secretary-General in his report that the main task for the United Nations in Sierra Leone remains the establishment of a credible peacekeeping presence in the country, with the aim of ensuring the security conditions for the advancement of the peace process. We commend the tireless efforts of the United Nations peacekeeping personnel in Sierra Leone, and in particular of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in performing their crucial tasks, and we call upon the Sierra Leonean parties to maintain a cooperative and credible association with UNAMSIL.

The signing of the Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and rebel forces in July 1999 had seemed to infuse new life into the prospects for a lasting settlement of the brutal eight-year civil war in that country. With the establishment and eventual expansion of the United Nations peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone, the international community demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that these hopes would not founder.

We must make clear to the leaders of the Sierra Leonean parties that we expect concrete and urgent action confirming their non-confrontational and constructive approach to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We must call upon them to honour the agreed promises which have been made, above all to their own people.

In conclusion, we fully support the proposal by the United Kingdom to issue a statement to the press in this regard.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his report and Assistant Secretary-General Annabi for the additional briefing he has just given. We would also like to commend you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Bangladesh for convening this open briefing.

Although the situation in Sierra Leone has been generally stable recently, many elements of instability still remain in the country. The Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP), in particular the actions of Mr. Sankoh and its failure to cooperate with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), has become the major roadblock to the peace process. We are deeply concerned at the slow pace of progress in the process of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of the ex-combatants. We are also deeply disturbed by the humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone, which remains serious, and by the human rights violations which continue to occur.

We concur with the Secretary-General's analysis, in part VII of his report, of the four main steps in the peace process. In this regard, we would like to emphasize our view that the RUFP must unconditionally implement the obligations undertaken under the Lomé Agreement and cease its opposition to and confrontation with the Government and UNAMSIL. It should be actively involved in the DDR process and cooperate with UNAMSIL in gaining access to the eastern and northern part of the country, and it should put an end to looting, kidnapping and other forms of human rights violations. We urge Mr. Sankoh to keep his promise on this issue.

Secondly, the international community should continue to support the peace process in Sierra Leone in various ways. We appreciate the positive efforts and the results achieved by Mali, the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States. We thank in particular Nigeria and other troop contributors to UNAMSIL, and we welcome the donor conference to be held later this month in London. We also hope that the parties concerned will continue to provide assistance in response to the United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for Sierra Leone, with a view to alleviating the humanitarian situation in that country.

Thirdly, we commend the Secretariat for its high degree of efficiency in deploying UNAMSIL. We also hope that UNAMSIL will continue, within the mandate given it by the Security Council, to fulfil its unique and important role in the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Finally, we are in agreement with the proposal to extend the interval between reports of the Secretary-General from 45 to 60 days.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I, too, wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting to give us the opportunity to hear Mr. Annabi. We wish to thank him for his update and for introducing the Secretary-General's report of 7 March on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which covers recent political developments, the security situation, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, human rights and humanitarian affairs.

We also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Greenstock, for having shared with the Council his observations from his recent visit to Sierra Leone.

Ambassador Greenstock's observations and Mr. Annabi's briefing clearly indicate that there exists a strong desire for peace on the part of the majority of the people of Sierra Leone. This makes the continuation of atrocities and abuses of human rights even more intolerable. Indeed, only last week the Council highlighted this in its statement to the press. It is clear that those atrocities must cease if Sierra Leone is to rebuild the social fabric it needs to ensure an effective State structure and a bright future for its population.

My delegation notes with concern that there has been little progress in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. We remain concerned that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commanders in the east of the country continue to prevent RUF and ex-army combatants from joining the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. We wish to emphasize that the low quality of surrendered weapons and the ratio of collected weapons to the number of ex-combatants — to which Mr. Annabi has referred — is another source of concern to my delegation.

We welcome the joint cooperation of UNAMSIL and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in developing a programme for the disposal of arms and ammunition. We hope that it will be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Annabi's briefing on the report of the Secretary-General noted several positive developments, which include the establishment of the Commission for

the Consolidation of Peace and the setting up of the National Electoral Commission. We look forward to continued progress in the development of a strategic framework approach for Sierra Leone and a military integration plan. But we would like to ask Mr. Annabi whether there have been any developments in the hearings for the commissioners for the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development.

We have been heartened to note the sterling contribution of UNAMSIL. In this regard, we wish to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the civilian and military components of UNAMSIL.

We have fully supported the expansion of UNAMSIL forces in Sierra Leone, which has included the incorporation of human rights training and monitoring, police training and the protection of women, children and other civilians. We believe the appointment of a senior child human rights monitor is a step in the right direction, but we would encourage further measures to be put in place to address the critical problem of the protection of children.

We are also very concerned about the continuing reports about the humanitarian situation. We have noted that Mr. Annabi referred to the withdrawal from RUF-controlled areas of Sierra Leone by two noted non-governmental organizations, which had been the only source of humanitarian relief for many people in Sierra Leone. We strongly urge that the Security Council send a strong message to the forces in Sierra Leone, calling on them to cooperate with the humanitarian relief agencies.

It was also distressing to learn that despite UNAMSIL's best intentions, resistance continues, and that there is a lack of cooperation between the RUF and UNAMSIL. We support the call for a strong statement from the Council to RUF leaders, especially Mr. Foday Sankoh, to cooperate with UNAMSIL and to refrain from making statements that would inflame the present situation.

As far as the security situation is concerned, we have also noted, in paragraph 21 of the Secretary-General's report, that the willingness of police personnel to return to former duty stations in the provinces has been affected by the violence inflicted on officers and their families during the conflict. We would like to hear further from Mr. Annabi whether there has been any progress made in that regard.

My delegation is encouraged by the continued positive involvement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). As we have heard, the recently concluded meetings held in Bamako under the auspices of ECOWAS have given us some hope that there will be some progress made in the further fulfilment of the Lomé Agreement. We wish to applaud the current leadership of ECOWAS on its initiative, and to encourage action aimed at putting further pressure on the parties involved to comply with the Lomé Agreement. We also wish to pay tribute to those troops that have made up the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), particularly to the Nigerian Government, which provided a smooth transition from ECOMOG to UNAMSIL.

We further endorse the recommendations of the Joint Implementation Committee aimed, *inter alia*, at accelerating the implementation of the Lomé Agreement regarding compliance with the disarmament process, the ceasefire agreement and unhindered humanitarian access.

We have further noted, in paragraph 9 of the report, that progress continues to be made towards developing the strategic framework approach for Sierra Leone, and that the United Nations country team has produced an initial report outlining principles and policies guiding United Nations actions and proposing appropriate institutional and coordination arrangements to ensure coherence among United Nations entities and partners. We wish to highlight this because it is important that once the security situation has been stabilized, attention be paid to Sierra Leone's economic and social development. In this regard, we wish to emphasize the importance of support for the upcoming international donor conference, to be held on 27 March under the auspices of the United Kingdom, because we believe that this will provide a useful forum through which tangible expressions of support can be derived.

However, a lingering question is, where do we go from here? Sierra Leone is a society in which women, children and civilians at large face a future of insecurity, terror and fear. We share the view that it is necessary to ensure a credible peacekeeping presence throughout Sierra Leone and to create a climate of confidence and security. We therefore concur with the four steps outlined by the Secretary-General in his report — the need for early disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; the extension of State authority, including

law enforcement; the improvement of Sierra Leone's capacity to ensure its own security; and national reconciliation and democratization — because we agree that all of these have to be in place if the election timetable is to be fulfilled.

We believe these four pillars can effectively chart the course for the viability of Sierra Leone. All of this will hinge on the political will of the parties and the support that the international community is prepared to give. We therefore wish to support the proposal for the press statement to be issued by the President at the conclusion of our meeting and the elements outlined by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important briefing. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report of 7 March and Mr. Annabi for his supplementary briefing and for the kind words that he, as well as the delegations of China and Jamaica, addressed to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Chairman.

We have studied the Secretary-General's report and have listened attentively to Mr. Annabi's briefing. We share their appraisal of the situation and of the outlook in Sierra Leone. As indicated by the Secretary-General's report and Mr. Annabi's briefing, the situation in Sierra Leone is precarious, even though modest progress has been made in implementing the Lomé Agreement. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the determination of the ECOWAS countries to support the efforts to consolidate the peace process.

I would also like to recall the outcome of the meeting of the Joint Implementation Committee, which took place at Bamako on 2 March. That meeting reaffirmed above all that the achievement of genuine and lasting peace in Sierra Leone remained fundamentally the responsibility of Sierra Leoneans themselves. The meeting particularly stressed the following points. First was the misinterpretation of the Lomé Agreement, particularly with regard to the creation and the mandate of a United Nations peacekeeping force. Secondly, the meeting stressed the slowness of the disarmament process, related to a large extent to the slow deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the difficulties of access for humanitarian agencies throughout the country. Finally the meeting especially stressed the need for the re-establishment of government institutions, including judicial, police and revenue-collection institutions.

The Bamako meeting also decided upon the following urgent actions. First, the immediate lifting by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of the obstacles it has placed in the way of UNAMSIL's deployment. In this regard, we welcome the measures announced at the follow-up meeting of 9 March to which Ambassador Greenstock referred. Secondly, the meeting also called for the immediate return by the RUF of the large quantities of weapons and equipment seized from the Guinean troops and the immediate return by RUF and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) of the weapons taken from the Kenyan forces. The meeting also called for the simultaneous dismantling by all combatants of all roadblocks throughout the country before the next follow-up meeting, which is to be held in Freetown on 20 March 2000. It emphasized that no party has the right to reign over any part of the territory of Sierra Leone as if it were its private kingdom. The meeting also stressed the need to accelerate the establishment of additional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration centres once UNAMSIL is deployed.

Other questions considered at that meeting were related, among other things, to the restructuring of Sierra Leonean armed forces and the implementation of the political provisions of the Lomé Peace Agreement. It was agreed that efforts needed to be made to implement those provisions, on the understanding that the capacity of the Government of National Unity to implement such provisions will be facilitated by its power to mobilize additional financial resources.

Lastly, the meeting recommended that regular consultations should be scheduled between the Government, the Revolutionary United Front Party, the AFRC and all other parties.

In conclusion, my delegation endorses the observations and recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report of 7 March. We also take the view that political and financial support of the international community in the current stage of the Sierra Leone peace process are essential. My delegation fully supports the proposals to extend the reporting period and for a statement to be made to the press, as proposed by Ambassador Greenstock. We would also like to thank him for the very useful information provided at the beginning of this meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.